

COMMANDING OFFICER, MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 31 SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY



Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the Marine Corps. Even one death by suicide is too many. It is a tragic and preventable loss, causing untold grief to loved ones and units, and is of highest concern to the public, legislators, the Commandant, and all Marines. In addition, suicide and suicidal behavior at all levels can take a tremendous toll on the readiness and resources of the unit involved. For all these reasons, suicide awareness, prevention, and intervention must be of highest priority to all Marines, and especially Marine leaders.

The Marine Corps sees suicide prevention as the responsibility of the entire Marine Corps community. Each of us, as fellow Marines, family members, and friends, is responsible for encouraging those who are troubled to seek help while their problems are still small, before they affect their relationships, work performance, career, mental health, or desire to live. Thus, suicide is prevented in your unit by addressing quality of life concerns and watching for "red flags" on a daily basis.

It is imperative that we **know our Marines and Sailors** – subordinates and peers. Indicators of someone thinking about hurting themselves include: Comments that suggest thoughts or plan of suicide, acquiring a method for suicide (e.g., buying a handgun), rehearsing suicidal acts, giving away possessions, obsessing about death, dying, etc, making amends or challenging people in an aggressive manner, uncharacteristic behaviors (e.g., reckless driving, excessive drinking, stealing, UA), significant change in workplace performance, appearing overwhelmed by recent stressor(s), displaying significant change in mood, seeing situation as hopeless, or displaying poor impulse control.

It is also imperative we (yes WE) create a climate that allows and encourages our people to seek help. If someone seems distressed or depressed, don't be afraid to ask the question, "Are you thinking of killing or hurting yourself?" If they are, get them immediate help from:

- Your chain of command
- Chaplain

Many Marines worry that seeking help will make them appear "weak" or "defective" to their peers or leaders. In the past there has probably been some basis for this worry, and the stigma associated with seeking help may still be a problem in some units. Current Marine Corps policy is for commands to create a climate where seeking help is encouraged to promote maximum personal and unit readiness.

If you are feeling distressed, depressed, or hopeless yourself, don't be afraid to ask for help. I need you to understand how extremely important your life is, and how much we need you on our team. Just as there is no shame in seeking help for a battlefield injury, there is no shame in asking for help regarding distress, depression, or thoughts of suicide. Consider the following sources that are standing by 24/7 to listen/help:

- Someone in your chain of command that you trust
- Chaplain
- *Military OneSource* 24/7 (800-342-9647)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255)
- HQMC Suicide Prevention Website (www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent)
- Leader's Guide for Managing Marines in Distress (www.usmc-mccs.org/leadersguide)
- Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) counselor for a particular area of distress (www.mccssc.com)
- ME, Colonel Mike "Homey" Cederholm cell (843)271-2231

SEEK HELP – SEEK TO HELP.

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael S. Cederholm".

MICHAEL S. CEDERHOLM
Colonel, United States Marine Corps